AMERICAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN®

**Letters to the Editor**

# Counseling Women on Options for Management of Early Pregnancy Loss

*Am Fam Physician.* 2012 Mar 15;85(6):547.

**Original Article:** Office Management of Early Pregnancy Loss

**Issue Date:** July 1, 2011

**Available at:** https://www.aafp.org/afp/2011/0701/p75.html (https://www.aafp.org/afp/2011/0701/p75.html)

TO THE EDITOR: Thank you to Drs. Prine and MacNaughton for a well-written review of the management of early pregnancy loss. However, I felt their description of manual vacuum aspiration was incomplete. I regularly perform this office procedure, and it is a dilation and curettage, the same as any elective abortion, with the same risks and pain. It is not to be compared with an endometrial biopsy. In the accompanying patient information handout, the statement about the paracervical block numbing the pain inaccurately implies that the procedure is pain-free. The cervix is usually softened because of the loss, and the procedure usually takes less than five minutes; however, women who elect manual vacuum aspiration in an office setting should realize that this procedure may involve considerable discomfort, even when conscious sedation is being administered. Women who may be unable to tolerate the discomfort of a dilation and curettage should consider other options, including undergoing the same procedure in an operating room.

AMANDA KAUFMAN, MD

Ann Arbor, Mich.

E-mail: hallberg@umich.edu (mailto:hallberg@umich.edu)

Author disclosure: No relevant financial affiliations to disclose.

IN REPLY: We appreciate Dr. Kaufman's concerns regarding the anticipatory guidance that women receive about the treatment for a miscarriage. Extensive literature exists on the pain associated with the first-trimester aspiration procedure.[1,2] Many authors conclude that the psychological state of the woman has the greatest influence on her perception of pain. As we point out in our article, patient preference about treatment choice is paramount. The article focuses on strategies that an office-based family physician can offer for management of miscarriage. However, after receiving accurate counseling regarding all aspects of the procedure (including logistics, timing, pain control, and cost), if the patient prefers a hospital-based procedure to expectant or medical management, or an office-based procedure, her preference should be honored.

We find that with this counseling nearly all women elect to stay within the family medicine office because this allows them to have a support person of their choosing with them throughout the procedure, and provides them the comfort and convenience of remaining in a familiar setting with a known physician. These benefits, in addition to other pain management modalities (including oral pain medications, the paracervical block, heat, music, and verbal anesthesia) allow women to cope exceptionally well with the discomfort of the procedure.

In the article, we noted that the procedure steps are similar to those of an endometrial biopsy, although a paracervical block is indicated and dilation of the cervix may be needed. This explanation of the required preparation and instruments is for physicians who may not perform the procedure.

During counseling, most women ask about the discomfort they will experience. The answer is that every option, including a procedure under general anesthesia, has its associated discomforts. Women should be counseled on all options and, ideally, be allowed to decide based on their preference rather than on availability of services.

LINDA PRINE, MD

New York, NY

E-mail: lindaprine@mac.com (mailto:lindaprine@mac.com)

HONOR MACNAUGHTON, MD

Malden, Mass

Author disclosure: No relevant financial affiliations to disclose.

## REFERENCES

1. Allen RH, Fortin J, Bartz D, Goldberg AB, Clark MA. Women's preferences for pain control during first-trimester surgical abortion: a qualitative study [published ahead of print October 11, 2011]. Contraception. http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824(11)00516-6/fulltext (http://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824(11)00516-6/fulltext). Accessed December 8, 2011.

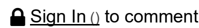
2. Tunçalp O, Gülmezoglu AM, Souza JP. Surgical procedures for evacuating incomplete miscarriage. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2010(9):CD001993.

Send letters to afplet@aafp.org (mailto:afplet@aafp.org), or 11400 Tomahawk Creek Pkwy., Leawood, KS 66211-2680. Include your complete address, e-mail address, and telephone number. Letters should be fewer than 400 words and limited to six references, one table or figure, and three authors.

Letters submitted for publication in AFP must not be submitted to any other publication. Possible conflicts of interest must be disclosed at time of submission. Submission of a letter will be construed as granting the AAFP permission to publish the letter in any of its publications in any form. The editors may edit letters to meet style and space requirements.

This series is coordinated by Kenny Lin, MD, MPH, Associate Deputy Editor for AFP Online.

0 comments


Sign In () to comment

**Continue reading from March 15, 2012** (https://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/0315/)

**View the full table of contents >>** (https://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/0315/)

Copyright © 2012 by the American Academy of Family Physicians.
This content is owned by the AAFP. A person viewing it online may make one printout of the material and may use that printout only for his or her personal, non-commercial reference. This material may not otherwise be downloaded, copied, printed, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any medium, whether now known or later invented, except as authorized in writing by the AAFP. Contact afpserv@aafp.org (mailto:afpserv@aafp.org) for copyright questions and/or permission requests.

Want to use this article elsewhere? Get Permissions (https://www.aafp.org/journals/afp/permissions/requests.html)

Counseling Women on Options for Management of Early Pregnancy Loss - Letters to the Editor - American Family Physician
https://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/0315/p547.html

Copyright © 2019 American Academy of Family Physicians. All rights reserved.
11400 Tomahawk Creek Parkway • Leawood, KS 66211-2680
800.274.2237 • 913.906.6000 • Fax: 913.906.6075 • contactcenter@aafp.org